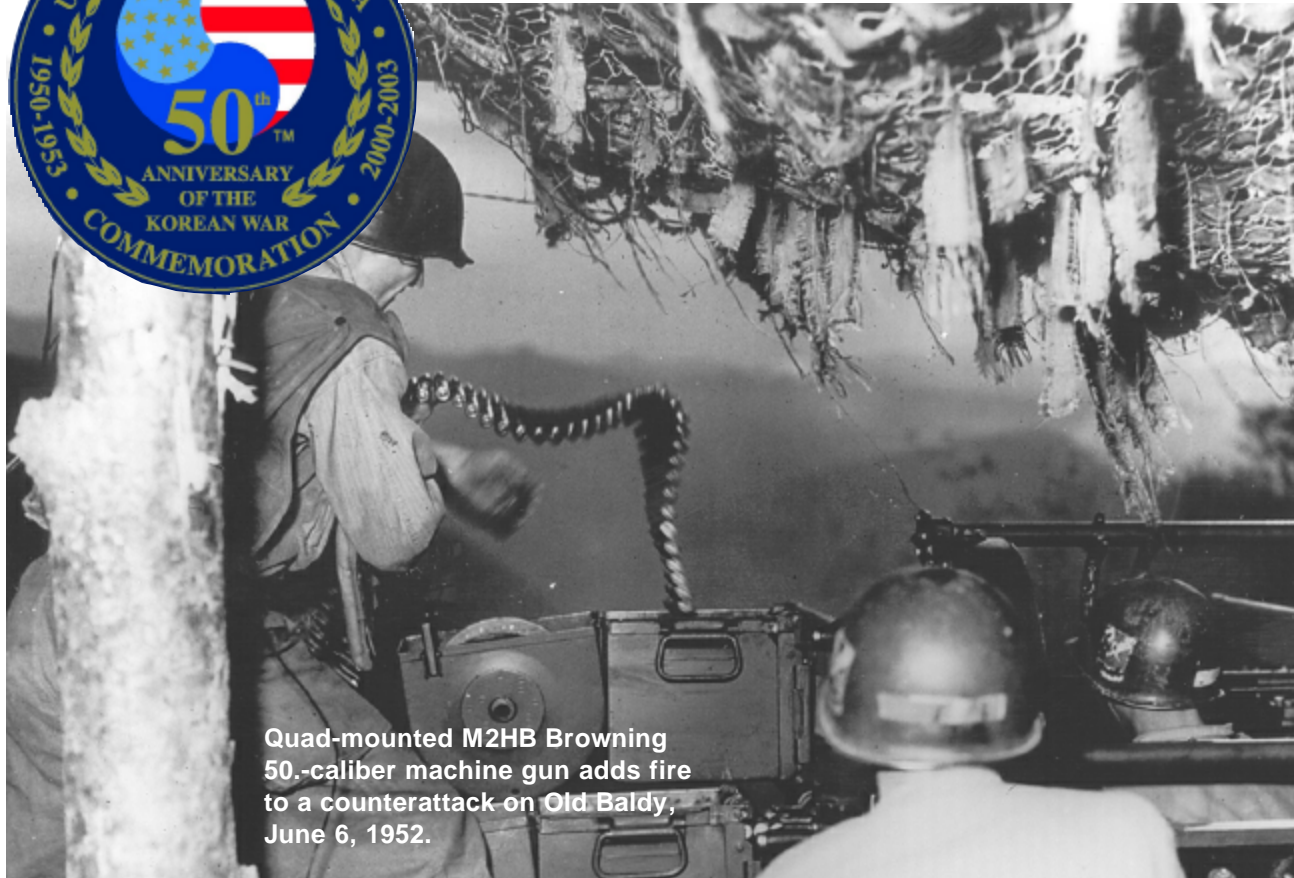




# FACT SHEET



Quad-mounted M2HB Browning 50.-caliber machine gun adds fire to a counterattack on Old Baldy, June 6, 1952.

## The Struggle for Korea Continues

May 1- November 30, 1952

### Truce Tent and Fighting Front

As spring returned to the war-torn Korean peninsula in 1952, the truce talks at Panmunjom had resolved most arrangements for a cease-fire, but the issue of prisoner repatriation remained unsettled. Communist negotiators insisted on full repatriation, while their United Nations (U.N.) counterparts stood firmly against any procedure that compelled an individual to return home against his will. As the deadlock continued, the Chinese and North Koreans, through their propaganda efforts, accused the United States of waging germ warfare and instigating a revolt at the U.N. prison complex on Koje Island.

Neither side showed much desire to launch major offensive operations or otherwise disturb the stalemate that had prevailed since the previous summer. In May, General Mark W. Clark replaced General Matthew B. Ridgway as the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command (UNC). Two National Guard infantry divisions, the 40th and 45th, arrived to replace the 1st Cavalry and 24th Infantry Divisions. Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet, commander of the Eighth U.S. Army, could call on five corps. From west to east, he had placed the U.S. I Corps (1st U.S. Marine Division, the British Commonwealth Brigade and 1st Republic of Korea (ROK) and U.S. 45th Infantry divisions); the U.S. IX Corps (9th ROK and U.S. 7th and 40th Infantry divisions); the ROK II Corps (6th ROK, Capital and 3d ROK divisions); the U.S. X Corps (7th ROK, U.S. 25th Infantry and 8th ROK divisions); and the ROK I Corps (two ROK divisions). These 247,500 frontline U.N. troops — 700,000 U.N. soldiers in all — faced

eight Chinese armies and three North Korean corps, which included 291,000 frontline soldiers and 908,000 total personnel.

## Limited Objectives and Digging In

Through May, the two sides continued the pattern of patrols, probes, raids and limited-objective attacks that had characterized operations since November 1951. Van Fleet had his corps commanders take full advantage of reduced operations to improve their defenses. U.N. troops moved bunkers below the crest of hills, strengthened them to withstand light shelling from artillery and mortars, and repositioned automatic weapons to obtain the best fields of fire. Intelligence indicated the communists were doing the same thing, in many places extending the depth of their works 20 miles to the rear. In addition, the enemy forces brought forward more artillery and improved their techniques of massing fire. In May alone, an estimated 102,000 artillery and mortar rounds fell on Eighth Army positions. To match the communist artillery buildup, Clark considered bringing two 280-mm artillery battalions from the United States, but these units would not be available until the end of the year, if then. In the meantime, U.N. forces tried ruses to inflict losses. In some cases, they withdrew outposts in the face of Chinese probes, allowed the enemy to occupy the abandoned positions, and then hit them with pre-sighted artillery. Within an hour, the Chinese usually retreated with heavy casualties.

Clark showed little inclination to do more as summer began. The Eighth Army was planning for an advance by IX Corps to new positions north of the Iron Triangle, the highly-fortified Ch'orwon-Kumhwa-P'yonggang area in the center of the front. Van Fleet argued this move would secure intelligence of enemy positions, give his new troops combat experience, destroy enemy supply stockpiles, and take advantage of American firepower and South Korean mobility in the mountains. But Clark disagreed. He knew that the communists had doubled their air and ground strength since the start of the truce talks. He also was concerned about casualties, the possible adverse effect on the ongoing negotiations, and the lack of U.N. reserves in the event of a strong enemy counterattack. Clark turned against battalion-sized and larger-scale raids to snatch prisoners after an effort by a reinforced battalion of the 11th ROK Division cost 326 South Korean casualties without producing a single enemy prisoner. He preferred to have the Eighth Army concentrate on patrols and allow the enemy do the attacking. Attempting to break the cease-fire impasse, Clark agreed to allow U.N. aircraft attack North Korean

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hydroelectric power facilities. These attacks began June 23 and lasted four days. Interestingly, some 160 MiG-15s based across the Yalu River from the Suiho facility fled to the interior of Manchuria during the strikes without putting up any resistance. When the attacks ended, more than 90 percent of North Korea's electric power complex was inoperable, and North Korea suffered an almost complete electrical blackout for more than two weeks.

## Old Baldy

The cautious U.N. commander in chief also was influenced by the losses suffered by U.N. forces in the battle for Old Baldy, which typified the see-saw-like hill battles during this static phase of the war. As May turned to June, Major General David L. Ruffner of the 45th Division was frustrated by the splendid view that enemy observers had of his division's positions. He laid plans for COUNTER, a two-phase operation to capture and hold 12 outposts in front of his main line. Following air strikes on June 6, elements of the division's 279th and 180th Infantry advanced after dark to seize 11 of the outposts against minimal resistance, except on Porkchop Hill — the sight of fierce fighting later in the war — and Old Baldy. By midnight, the Americans held all their objectives, and they rushed to build up their positions against the expected enemy counterattacks. On June 12, the Americans seized their twelfth objective after a hard fight.

Provoked, the Chinese struck back, especially on Old Baldy, where their works lay only 1,000 feet from the U.N. positions. Supported by artillery and mortar fire, the communists daily probed and attacked the U.N. works. In mid-July, and again in mid-September, the Chinese mustered enough force to drive the Americans from the crest, but counterattacks by the 23d Infantry and later the 38th Infantry of the 2d Infantry Division eventually regained control of the hill. On July 11 and 12, as ground forces fought back and forth, nearly every operational air unit in the Far East attacked P'yongyang. Even larger attacks on the same target followed on Aug. 29.

The battle for Old Baldy was costly to both sides. Through July 21, the United Nations had lost 357 men in the battle for the hill, and Chinese casualties were estimated to be more than 1,000.

## Stalemate

Old Baldy was the most prominent but only one of a series of battles for favorable terrain during the summer. During the last week of July and most of August, heavy rains restricted activity, but at various points the struggle for key terrain continued. On the 1

Corps and II ROK Corps fronts, Marines and South Korean troops captured crucial positions and held them against the inevitable Chinese counterthrusts.

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During October, a series of communist attacks produced some of the heaviest fighting along the front in a year. On Hill 281 and Hill 395, northwest of Ch'orwon, U.N. troops were hit by a massive mortar and artillery barrage on Oct. 6, followed by a series of assaults. After nine days, U.N. forces still held the disputed ground and the enemy withdrew having lost 2,000 dead.

The indications of increasing communist activity led Van Fleet to urge a limited objective attack on the IX Corps front north of Kumhwa. There, the Chinese held a V-shaped complex of hills extending from an apex at Triangle Hill northwest to Pike's Peak and northeast to Jane Russell Hill. Clark agreed on the basis that three battalions could do the job in five days with about 200 casualties. However, the demands of the South Koreans' struggle to hold their position on White Horse Hill limited the Air Force to two days of preliminary attacks. When the 31st Infantry of the 7th Infantry Division started up the hills on Oct. 14, it found a ready and determined foe. After two days of assaults, the 31st finally occupied Hill 598 at the tip of Triangle Hill but then ran into fierce resistance in the tunnels at the base of Pike's Peak. On Oct. 16, a fresh American battalion took Jane Russell Hill, and on Oct. 18, the Americans briefly captured the crest on Pike's Peak, only to lose it that evening to a counterattack. After holding the position against repeated enemy counterattacks, the division turned over the area to the 2d ROK Division on Oct. 25. In all, the attacks tied up eight of the division's nine battalions and cost 2,000 losses in 12 days of fighting, all of which proved for

naught when a massive Chinese attack overwhelmed the ROKs on Nov. 1.

## Conclusion

The heavy fighting of the previous two months subsided in November, as the front returned to its old pattern of patrols, probes and small-scale attacks. The stalemate showed no signs of ending, either on the battlefield or at the negotiating table. In mid-October, the talks broke off after the communists rejected the latest U.N. proposal on repatriation, and American Secretary of State Dean Acheson told the U.N. General Assembly that they now faced a test of the United Nation's staying power on that issue. The only development that promised change was the U.S. presidential election in November of Dwight D. Eisenhower. Perhaps a new president could find a way to bring peace to the troubled peninsula of Korea.

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